

Augustus

The Dilemma

As you have studied, Augustus was a planner. Whether it was his work on aqueducts or a large standing army, Rome's first emperor had a vision for his homeland. Rome was much better for his leadership, but, one



Island of Capri

question loomed ominously: Who is going to be Rome's *second* emperor? It was to plan for this scenario that brought Augustus to the island fortress at Capri in 14 AD.

The Candidates

Two possible candidates were in line to succeed Augustus: his grandson Agrippa Postumus and his adopted son Tiberius Claudius Nero. Nero was the obvious choice, because he was experienced and intelligent, but he was not related to Augustus. Agrippa, who was in his early 20s, was violent, had been disowned by Augustus and was currently being held prisoner on an island.

Augustus decided to make one final visit to his grandson to see if anything had changed. As he landed on the beach, his grandson was astonished to see his grandfather, and rushed to embrace him. As the two talked, Augustus realized Agrippa had not changed, and he knew what needed to be done.



Nero



Agrippa

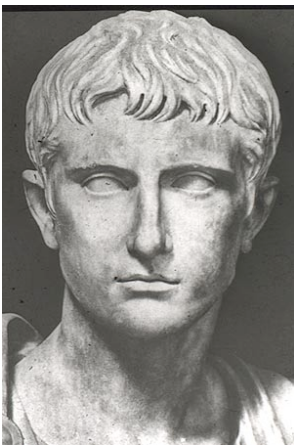
The Plan

Augustus met with a small set of advisers that would serve as a succession committee. This group would be vital to making sure things went well after his death. Augustus decided to travel along the Appian Way with Tiberius. He would then retire to Nola, the simple town near Vesuvius where his father had died. When the end was near, he would send secret messengers to all the army commanders detailing the change of power. As Augustus and Tiberius traveled on the Appian Way towards Rome, he became gravely ill, so he set in motion the series of succession steps.

The End

As Augustus traveled home to his wife, Livia, something miraculous happened; he became healthy. Not only did the sickness pass, but he felt full of health once again. As he took a nap that afternoon, Livia coated much of the fruit on the fig tree in their garden with poison. That night, he and his wife went out to the garden, as they often did, and picked figs for a snack. Livia was sure to not select the poisoned ones. As Augustus was overcome with deathly pain that night, he rolled over and thanked his wife. In the morning, with Livia and Tiberius by his side, he uttered his final words:

“I found Rome built of clay: I leave it to you in marble.”



Augustus



Livia

Questions:

1. Describe Augustus' plans for succession
2. What did Augustus do about Agrippa?
3. Why would Augustus travel along the Appian Way with Tiberius?
4. Why would Livia poison her husband, and why would he thank her?

Everitt, Anthony. *Augustus: The Life of Rome's First Emperor*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006.